Motorcade, public (Oswald's?) knowledge of Dallas trip, etc. from 1/27/64 executive session transcript

1/27/64

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how much time you yet have and whether you want to see the members of the staff, and it takes some time for me to try to tell you about each of these areas, our approach.

What is your pleasure?

Rep. Boggs. I think we had better do it as quickly as we can.

The Chairman. All right, go ahead.

Mr. McCloy. The appointment I have at the White House has been cancelled.

The Chairman. Go right ahead.

Mr. Rankin. The first area is the day of the assassination, and all of the various elements that are involved in that, and that includes the plans for the trip, the program at the Trade Mart, the checking out of that area to be sure that it was secure, all of the steps that were made by the Secret Service in that regard, the collaboration between the police, and the Secret Service, and any other agencies such as the county sheriff in connection with the parade and the route that was designated or planned.

The decision as to when that material would be released to the public, and the date of the release. The fact that the intention of the President to go to Dallas was not indicated in the press until in October, but the fact that he was going to Texas as distinguished from Dallas was indicated September 26. September 26 is the date that Oswald went down to Mexico City, and

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the article about the President coming to Texas was in the paper on that day before he went to Mexico City as far as we can determine.

Now, we have difficulty determining the exact time that he went to Mexico City, because the exit record on the border is such that it extends from the period 8 in the morning until 7 at night, and he was shown to have passed through but the exact time is not shown by the materials we have yet.

However, we do have a record that he was supposed to have gone one way by car and one way by bus, and they haven't gotten the exact time on the bus for us, and they haven't got the story of what -- who he went with in the car.

So that it is important to keep in mind in connection with that the fact that he could have known that the President was probably coming to Dallas, because we think that, and we have checked this out somewhat, that if the President was going to Dallas on what was a political trip, and this was a political as distinct from a governmental.

Mr. McCloy. You said Texas, not Dallas.

Mr. Rankin. Presumably, he would not go to Houston or San Antonio without going to the Dallas area. That it has been in the nature of politics that Presidents in going to Texas make it a point to try to get to the middle area as well as the Houston area if they are going to go there on political trips.

So we believe that it is reasonable to assume that the moment

The Report (p. 301) asserts that Oswald returned from Mexico by bus, not by car.

it appeared in the papers on September 26th that the President decided to go to Texas, even though he didn't specify Dallas or Fort Worth, that it was probable that he was going to go there.

We also checked with the Secret Service people, and there was, as you may recall, another building that would have served well as the purpose of the meeting despite the Trade Mart and that was the Woman's building. It was located in a different area of the city. But the Secret Service people say that a President would be expected to go down the Main Street and having his parade, and so forth, and if either way it would be expected that he would go down Houston Street, which enters into Elm, one way if he was from the Woman's Building he could come down from the other section of the city and come to Houston which would be right by the window on the sixth floor of the Depositary Building where, as you recall the pictures, he would have an excellent shot right down Houston Street in order to go over to Main or if you go the other way around, in order to go the Trade Mart, Building he would come down Main, go down Houston and Elm like he did.

So that to anticipate that this particular location would be a prime location for anything like this depending upon either of the probable places where he would have such a banquet or a dinner is reasonable in light of our conversations with the Secret Service, and how they would expect a parade route to be laid out.

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Mr. Dulles. If he was making a speech in the evening would he have gone there, I rather thought not from something I read, probably would go to a big banquet room in a hotel. That might be worth looking into.

Mr. Rankin. That might be difficult, we didn't canvass it except for the luncheon, as I recall he was going on down as soon as the plans were announced to another locality.

Mr. Dulles. As soon as the plans were announced, the plans were fixed. But at this stage I don't think they could tell whether it would be luncheon or dinner, whatever it would be, midday.

Mr. Rankin. That is right.

So it is possible he could have made as part of his plans from the time he left to go to Mexico City to try to locate in this building and go ahead with the assassination.

Now, that would assume that it is possible that he talked to people about such plans, and had collaborators concerning them in Mexico City. We do not have enough information about that to know what happened there except we do have information that he tried to get a visa at the Cuban Embassy, and he tried to get a visa at the Soviet Embassy, and we know the hotel he stayed at, and we have a very limited report from the hotel keeper about most of it to the effect that they knew nothing about him, didn't even know that he came or went, although there were seven days between the time he went down on the 26th, and the third when he came back.

The Report and the evidence leave no doubt that the Oswalds planned to leave New Orleans for Dallas long before September 26, 1963. Rankin's files contained this information before he misinformed the Commissioners. If what he here says has meaning, it has to relate to conspiracy, not to Oswald. What the Report says (p. 413) is: "In September...He [Oswald] approved arrangements for his family to return to Irving, Texas....On September 20, 1963, Mrs. Ruth Paine and her two children arrived in New Orleans...and left...with Marina Oswald and June and most of the Oswalds' effects 3 days later....Oswald left for Mexico City on September 25..."

What Rankin tells the Commissioners "is possible" was, from the evidence by then in hand, totally impossible.

It also indicated that he had a limited visa from the United States, and, therefore, could not expect to get another one in connection with his travels down in Mexico.

Mr. Dulles. We don't give visas to Mexico.

Mr. Rankin. It was a border crossing.

Mr. Dulles. I thought these travel things in Mexico were limited.

The Chairman. A travel permit for two weeks.

Mr. Rankin. Fifteen days.

Mr. Dulles. I think that is Mexico and not the United States.

Sen. Cooper. Trying to get them to speed up their actions.

Mr. Rankin. Yes.

So that we have a wide range of inquiry yet in Mexico City as to the seven days and his activities there.

Sen. Russell. Who has been doing the investigating in Mexico?

Mr. Rankin. The C.I.A. has been working with us in regard to that area, and the F.B.I. has an attache there who has done some work but most of it has been by the C.I.A., and we have a question there of how much of our information we have gotten from the F.B.I. in an exhibit to the C.I.A. and prior to that, and we need some instruction with regard to that.

Now, we are going to have a meeting with the agencies and see if it is acceptable to them in such a meeting to supply the

For an example of the Commission's lack of investigation into Oswald's trip to Mexico, see p. 165.

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information themselves rather than having the Commission supply the information it has received from any of the agencies to these -- the C.I.A. and other people that we will need help from.

Sen. Russell. Mr. Rankin, have you given any thoughts to the fact that Oswald was not familiar with Dallas. He had this road map to go around to inquire for jobs and yet you are assuming that he knew all about these routes and everything else, when he posted himself up there to shoot the President, if he did in fact shoot him, and of course the evidence seems to be overwhelming that he did. That has caused me to believe that he had to have someone somewhere to advise him about that.

Mr. Rankin. Well, that Nation article is very interesting, Senator, in regard to your question, because --

Sen. Russell. I haven't read that article, but that occurred to me at the outset. Everybody said he posted himself there and got this employment and all, but he was not familiar with Dallas. Apparently he hadn't lived there --

Mr. McCloy. It was published in the Dallas paper with an arrow showing what the direct line was to be two days before the President came, I mean the Dallas paper had a diagram showing him coming down the street and going --

Sen. Russell. But he has already been in Mexico City before that, some time before that.

Mr. McCloy. Yes, that is true.

Mr. Rankin. This article sets out in some detail there a

This map in fact showed the motorcade going other than it did. It is reproduced in WHITEWASH, p. 23.